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Questions People Ask

Luke 7:36-50

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BACK TO MAIN SERMON PAGE

Picture the scene. It is Sunday dinner following church. The pastor has been invited, and of course he says Grace. God is invoked with thanksgiving, and then the conversation begins.

That's the picture we have here. Out in the street word gets around. People are talking. Jesus is having dinner with Simon the Pharisee. The woman hears about it. She wonders, but makes up her mind quickly. She goes to her home, prepares herself. On goes the best dress, the cosmetics, the mascara. She grabs that precious bottle of ointment and is on her way.

Simon and his friends are talking with Jesus. These Pharisees lived with a conscious accent on ritual purity. They, like my mother, believed that "cleanliness is next to godliness." The avoided anyone they considered "unclean."

But someone unclean comes to dinner. The woman comes upon the scene. She is unwanted" She is out of place. And then her behavior becomes unseemly. The enthusiastic conversation ceases, thus amplifying her expressions. She is crying. The tears stream down. The mascara disfigures her countenance. She is touching Jesus. He is allowing her to do it. She is washing his feet with her tears, and wiping them with her hair. She is kissing his feet, of all things. And she is contaminating him in front of all these Pharisees.

Simon, the host, Is appalled. To himself he asks the question, "Who then Is this Jesus?" He concludes that he is no prophet. He's letting her get by with her behavior. She who Is unclean, who is a sinner, has inappropriately thrust herself into their presence, and contaminated their guest.

The other guests at the table have their own questions as well. They hear Jesus' gracious words of forgiveness extended to this woman of the street. "Who is he, who forgives sins?" It is clear that they don't. Their behavior is such that they don't see themselves in need of forgiveness. Nor do they forgive others.

The woman has her questions. That's why she came. "Who is this Jesus? I've heard about him. Is he for real? Will he accept me? Will he let me pour out my soul? Look, he doesn't judge me. He doesn't cast me away like I'm nothing."

It seems like the question "Who is Jesus" was on everyone's mind. Jesus put it to his disciples: "Who do men say that I am? (John the Baptist, come back to life; Elijah perhaps...) "And who do YOU say I am?" Peter: "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God!"

Two thousand years have come and gone, and people still question Jesus. The " Jesus Seminar" people keep asking the question, and Jesus gets smaller, and smaller, and smaller. Be careful of these people. At the same time, perhaps YOU need to ask the question: "Who is this Jesus, with respect to MY life?"

Simon's difficulties were that he and his friends drew lines in the sand. The woman's difficulties were that she wondered if Jesus could accept one such as her. The friends' difficulties were that they were unforgiving by nature. What are your difficulties? Do you need help with coping skills? Turn to Jesus. Do you need help turning your life around? Turn to Jesus. Do you need help accepting people who are different from yourself? Jesus will help you. Are you struggling with faith, demanding reason instead? Turn to Jesus. John Calvin, who gave so much to the continuing reformation of the Church, brilliantly expounded the Word and who placed high premium upon giving God our minds, adopted as his personal crest an open outstretched palm holding a heart, with the words "My heart I give Thee, Lord, eagerly and sincerely." She gave Jesus her heart. In your questioning, will you give Him yours?

BACK TO MAIN SERMON PAGE

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